

Annual Darwin Scholarship Programme Monitoring and Communicating Biodiversity

A short scholarship programme led by the Field Studies Council in the UK.

26 August – 5 September 2011 at Preston Montford Field Centre, Shrewsbury

The Darwin Scholarship Programme has been running since 2008. Over 50 people from 30 countries have attended. Feedback from the programmes have been tremendously positive.

In 2011 we will be running the fourth Darwin Scholarship Programme. We are now inviting applications for the 25 places that are available.



Darwin Scholars 2008



Darwin Scholars 2009



Darwin Scholars 2010

Quotes from Scholars attending the programme in 2010

“Before the course I was only interested in birds, now I have found many other sides to biodiversity and have the skills to investigate them”

“Learnt about the importance of communication, bridging the gap between scientists and public”

The scholarship programme is aimed at...

Young Scientists from around the world, probably working for a non-governmental organisation, government department or in a Biology or Ecology faculty at University. You should be under the age of 35 and studying at graduate or post graduate level or be a young lecturer or work for an environmental organisation.

The aim of the Darwin Scholar Programme is to develop “better naturalists” in the spirit of Darwin’s love of nature and observing the natural world. The Scholarship will focus on three areas: skills of observation and identification, skills of recording biodiversity and skills of communicating biodiversity to different target groups.

This is a unique opportunity to work with leading scientists and educators in the UK and will be based in Shrewsbury - a beautiful historic English market town and the birthplace of Charles Darwin.

Reasons and Purpose of the Scholar Scholarship

On a global scale there are a number of key needs related to science education.

- Firstly there is a global shortage of taxonomists and experts with observation and identification skills,
- Secondly there is a need to record biodiversity in a more coherent and robust way both nationally and internationally and
- Thirdly there is a huge need for scientists to communicate more effectively with a range of different groups from school students and the general public through to decision makers.

The Scholarship focuses on these three needs with the overall goals of the scholarship being to:

- Strengthen the exploration and observational competencies of young field scientists at University level to develop more skilled naturalists;
- Give a greater understanding of the importance of national biodiversity databases and recording;
- Enhance the ability of scientists to communicate effectively with a variety of target groups;
- Build learning partnerships in local communities to monitor local biodiversity; and
- Develop resources and materials that will promote first hand exploration and observation.

The FSC is offering this scholarship as part of its ongoing international programme of work and to celebrate the work of Charles Darwin. Although Darwin is usually remembered for his work on the theory of evolution, much of this work was based on an enthusiasm for the natural world together with first hand observation and exploration of the natural environment. As Charles Darwin said later in his life “I was born a naturalist”.

The Field Studies Council aims to promote the same enthusiasm and understanding of the natural world that Darwin did in order to achieve our goal of “bringing environmental understanding to all”. We want to share our enthusiasm and expertise with young scientists across the world and create a learning community dedicated to enhancing public participation in biodiversity conservation and highlight the importance of exploration and observation to understand the world we live in.

What will scholars do in more detail

We aim to train a group of 25 young “up and coming” scientists:

- Basic techniques of biodiversity monitoring and identification,
- The creation and management of national databases and recording networks,
- Fundamental approaches to communicating biodiversity to a range of audiences,
- How to lead and manage school and community based biodiversity monitoring projects and
- How to develop biodiversity education materials for different groups based on FSC expertise.

For this we will provide training using the expertise of both the Field Studies Council and other biodiversity organisations in the UK. One of the goals of the course would also be the sharing of positive ideas and solutions to the biodiversity challenges that we face on a local through to a global scale.

The scholarship programme will involve a number of different kinds of activities:

- Training workshop activities focusing specifically on identification and observation skills, the development of identification keys and communication skills,
- Lectures from FSC and other organisations ,
- Meetings with leading ecological organisations in the UK such as the Natural History Museum ,
- Excursions to areas that inspired Darwin – and to the places he lived ,
- An opportunity for you to meet with leading scientists in Britain that work in your research area,

- Sharing your experience through a formal presentation to other scholars on the programme and earning more about biodiversity in other parts of the world and
- A social programme including local excursions.

Field Studies Council (FSC)

The FSC was founded in 1943 with the mission statement of “bringing environmental understanding to all” and is one of the leading environmental education organisations in the United Kingdom. We achieve our goal through a network of seventeen field centres spread across the UK. The FSC employs over 75 trained geography, ecology and biology tutors and each year over 100,000 people experience FSC courses. In addition to running courses we also manage two national nature reserves and have a world respected range of publications, especially in the area of taxonomy.

Please go to our website www.field-studies-council.org for more information

Funding the Scholarship

The full cost of the 10 day scholarship programme is 1450 GBP per person. This covers the costs of all accommodation, teaching, and local travel in the UK. It **does not cover** the cost of getting to and from Preston Montford Field Centre in Shrewsbury.

The FSC will assist successful applicants in this process and provide suggestions of sources of funding and also letters of support for applications to grant organisations.

To help meet the cost of the scholarship the FSC is also providing a limited number of bursaries for 650 GBP.

How do you apply?

We are looking for up to 25 scholars from countries across the world to join this fourth Darwin Scholarship Programme.

Before you apply please make sure that you are able to meet these criteria:

- You are aged 35 or under,
- You are studying for or have a degree in Ecology, Biology or related subject,
- You are an undergraduate, postgraduate, postdoctoral student, young lecturer or work for an environmental organisation,
- You can speak and read English well this is very important. There will be no interpretation or translation facilities and
- You have the support of your University or other organisation for the Scholarship programme.

There is no application form. To apply you will need to send us:

1. Your CV

Your CV can be in any format that is usual for your country – but must include your home and work addresses, email and telephone contacts, and skype address if you have one. You must also include the name of two referees we can write to. Please do not include reference letters with your application. Do try and keep less than 5 pages.

2. A short letter in English

Your letter should be of no more than two sides of A4, explaining why you want to take part in the scholarship programme. It should provide the following information – why you want to become a Darwin scholar, your personal assessment of your identification/observation capacity, your views on how well science is communicated to a wider audience and the role of scientists in education and what you will do with the new skills that you gain through the scholarship. You need to persuade us that YOU are the young, dynamic and enthusiastic scientist we are looking for from your country.

3. A letter of support

A letter from your University or organisation that states clearly that you have permission to take part in the scholarship programme.

4. Request for an FSC bursary

If you would like to apply for an FSC bursary of 650 GBP please state this in your short letter.

Your application should reach the Field Studies Council not later than 31st January 2011. You do not need to have guaranteed funding before making your application.

**You application should be emailed to global@field-studies-council.org
Contact person is Janet Jones.**

How does the selection process work?

Your applications will be assessed by a small team from the FSC. The FSC will select the Scholars for the programme and selection will be based on:

- The quality of your application especially your letter,
- The strength and commitment of your University / Place of work and
- The likelihood of you getting the required funding.

We shall make an initial selection based on these criteria and then in some cases undertake a follow up interview either by phone or Skype.

We shall inform you whether your application has been successful by mid February 2011 to hopefully give you enough time to raise the necessary funding.

We are looking forward to receiving your application.



Sue Townsend
Course Director



Richard Dawson
Course Director